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TRACK  
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ROAD







*See you on January 7th*

*Cooper Webb  
Anaheim, California*





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**MX**

## **The next step...**

There are already some questions that float to mind about 2017 MXGP: Can Gajser bear the pressure? Can Paulin rediscover his mojo? Will Desalle be faster on the Kawasaki? But one of the biggest in our minds will be over the potential of #222. Can Tony Cairoli fire back to the heights of 2009-2014 and remind the youngsters of a thing or two about a title campaign?

**Photo by Ray Archer**















**MotoGP**

## **Gas it...**

One of our favourite pics from the many contenders captured by CormacGP from MotoGP circuits in 2016 and somewhat fitting to compliment our interview with Cal Crutchlow in this last issue of the year. It kinda says something about riding a motorcycle fast...

**Photo by CormacGP**







**AMA-SX**

## **Count the days...**

Almost Anaheim time and Christmas represents the last few quiet days on most AMA Supercross teams schedules before the bevy of seventeen races in eighteen weeks. The excitement and anticipation will peak for the first gathering at the Angel Stadium on January 7th

Photo by Ray Archer











# LEATT MX 2017







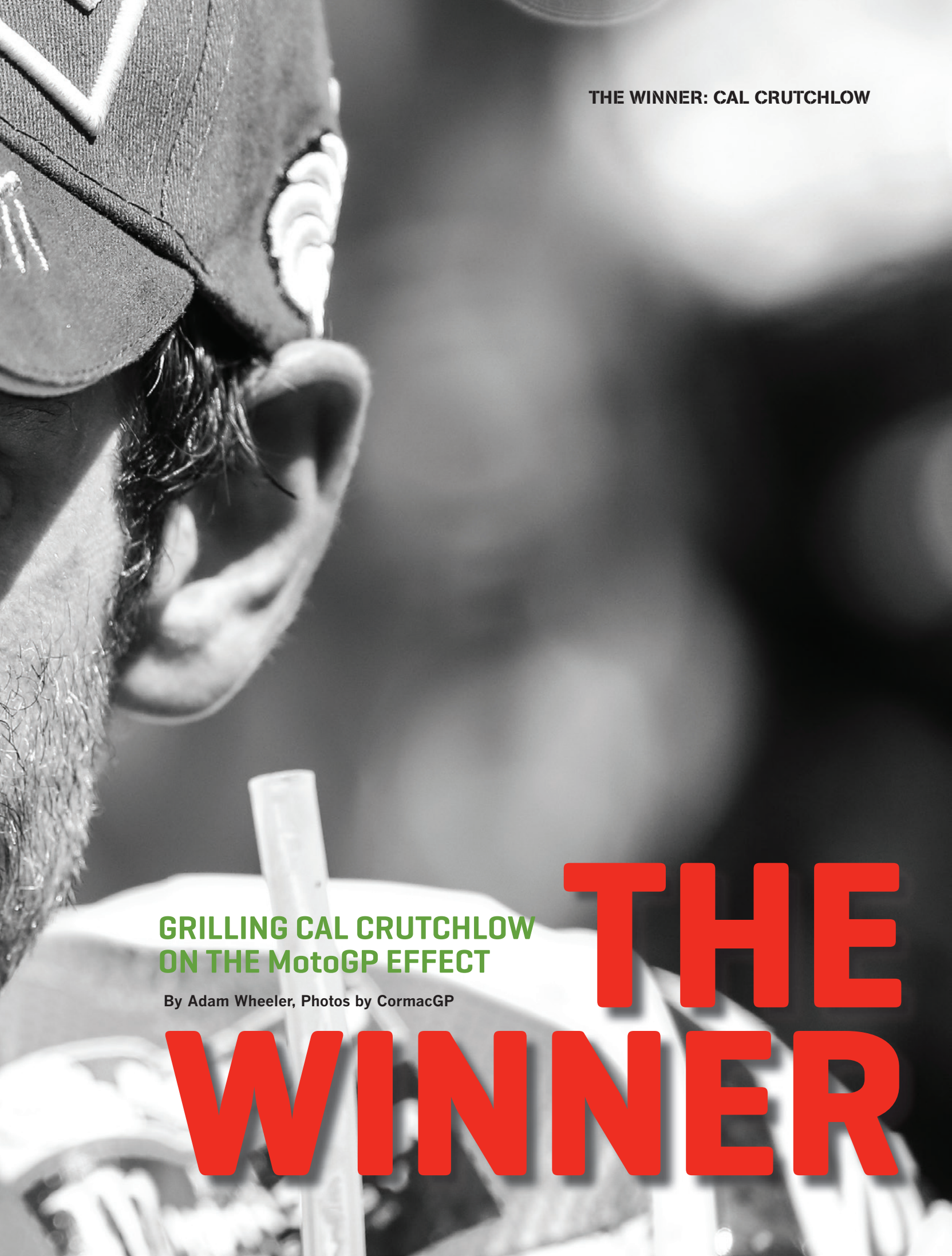
**LEATT**

OVER TO YOU









THE WINNER: CAL CRUTCHLOW

GRILLING CAL CRUTCHLOW  
ON THE MotoGP EFFECT

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by CormacGP

# THE WINNER



**I**t took 31 year old Cal Crutchlow seven seasons of education, graft, circumstance and negotiation of the sticky elements of MotoGP to finally douse Great Britain's parched 'dry spell' and drag up Barry Sheene's name. The LCR Honda rider clinched victory in the Grands Prix of Czech Republic and Australia last summer to end almost four decades of waiting for UK fans in the premier class of the world's fastest motorcycling racing series, and since the iconic #7 last prompted the national anthem to ring out from the top of a 500cc podium.

Honest to the point of bluntness, possessor of a searing and barbed wit and purveyor of cheeky comments sometimes (sometimes not) culminated with a lopsided grin; Crutchlow is Britain's most outspoken and ferocious motorcycle athlete...both on and off his 350kmph HRC rocket ship.

It is no exaggeration to conclude that 2016 was the standout year of the former world Super-sport champion's time on this planet. Crutchlow and wife Lucy welcomed daughter Willow into their Isle of Man abode and professional goals were achieved after the most horrendous of starts to the season and a spate of falls that meant he had just five points on the board after five rounds. 2016 MotoGP went through a sea-change with new spec Michelin tyres and electronics as well as an RCV motorcycle that swirled some daunting waves for Cal in what was his second term with Lucio Cecchinello's expressive set-up.

"The beginning was really tough and difficult: new tyres and traction control software, new engine, new bike...it was difficult to put it all together," the diminutive Italian says. "Cal's riding style did not fit together with the first

generation of the Michelin tyre. The front tyre was very sensitive so you couldn't brake very hard or be very aggressive because it would not support the smallest mistake; that is why we had a lot of crashes. Fortunately he didn't get injured. We eventually had an important change when Michelin brought new material and it allowed Cal to hammer the brakes and make a step forward. We received some engine updates from HRC and then we had a chance to test a chassis specification in Brno that suited Cal a bit more. We put these small things together and we learned about and improved the traction control software and suddenly we had this '180' [in form] because we had the podium in Germany, the victory in Brno, the podium at Silverstone and the win in Australia and were quite competitive regularly."

Glory and tears for the emotional Cecchinello would arrive in the midst of the summer but only after moments of frustration and concern, and with Crutchlow even joking to the press at one stage that the 'satellite' team's spares budget was taking a hefty hit. "I had a lot of tough moments but I always tried to believe and keep the team together," the former racer says. That included pacification of his most prized asset and careful management of Crutchlow's relentless determination. Cecchinello smiles when asked about dealings with his rider. "His character is definitely a bit 'special' but he is someone who is very straight and direct and so far we have not had any discussion, argument or disappointment," he asserts. "We understand each other quite well. He is not a child, he is a man and he's mature and he understands this business. I [initially] saw Cal as a fast, tough guy with a tough personality but with a lot of fighting spirit...I've always had a very good impression."





Success trails other baggage. Crutchlow is now much more in demand. When we first meet on the opening day of the final Grand Prix of the season at Valencia he is irritated by a media appointment as he deals with a broken foot (as a consequence of a 'get-off' two weeks previously in Malaysia) and also chin-rubbing and perplexing initial sessions of practice at the scratchy Ricardo Tormo circuit. Thankfully Britain's most successful representative in the MotoGP era is in better form the following afternoon and when we sit down over one of his favoured cappuccinos (hardly any of his media debriefs in the white palatial setting of the LCR hospitality is taken without one).

**Was this year quite a mind-boggling time for you? Both for becoming a father and that emphatic turnaround on a professional level?**

Hmmm, not really, you know. At the start of the year I honestly believed I was riding better than I was at the end. It was just that nothing went my way. I had to jump off the bike in the race at Qatar otherwise I would have been fifth or sixth. In Argentina I crashed on a wet-patch, like six others. In Austin I crashed pushing too hard. In Jerez I had a rear tyre that should not have been on the grid. I had no points basically. Was it four points? I don't even know what the f\*\*k I had. My pace was good at that time and for whatever reason it wasn't converting into results. Only my team and Honda knew the situation. Everyone else was saying 'blah, blah, blah, you'll retire at the end of the year, you're done...'-







THE WINNER: CAL CRUTCHLOW



**“AT THE END OF THE DAY I’M NOT BARRY SHEENE AND I’M NOWHERE NEAR HIS STATURE AND STUFF LIKE THAT; I’VE WON TWO MOTOGP RACES!...I’M NOT HERE TO LOOK AT NUMBERS AND SAY ‘I WON THIS OR HAD THAT AMOUNT OF POINTS OR PODIUMS...’ I NEVER LOOK AT STATISTICS. I JUST TRY MY BEST ON THE DAY AND THAT’S IT...”**





10

FEATURE



**Were you really getting those vibes?**

Everybody was saying it. It's like [Jorge] Lorenzo. He was also 'done' in the middle of the year and look at him in Valencia. This is just part of sport and you need to be able to take it on the chin and come back stronger. The only race this year where I felt I performed terribly was Mugello [Italy]. I rode around because Lucio came to me before and said 'you have to finish'. Plus at Mugello I ran a 320 brake disc at a 350kmph front straight when I should have run a 340 but I was told I had been crashing because of the front brake...which was not true.

**Why the crashes then?**

We were pushing too much with the front of the Honda because we had no other advantage. In Sachsenring, Brno, Silverstone and Australia what were they [the critics] saying then? I had a great second half to the year but I honestly believe that the first part could have been the same if the circumstances had been on my side.

**How do you deal with the adversity? Do you dig-in and say 'I'm gonna prove you all wrong' or do you ignore it? Or do you want to bang your head on the wall?**

What can you do? Even at the time of the poor results I was still in line for the factory ride if [Dani] Pedrosa was not going to stay because they [HRC] know my potential on the bike. There is nobody else – apart from Marc [Marquez] and Dani – that has the [same] potential on this bike. They want to promote having younger riders and the guys coming up like [Enea] Bastianini but put them on it and you'll see. It is not the same as jumping on the Yamaha and I think [MotoGP rookies in 2017, Johann] Zarco and [Jonas] Folger will do alright. I'd love to pick up the likes of Pol [Espargaro] and Bradley [Smith] put them on this bike and see where they'd finish because

I know about the package they had at Tech3... I rode it. Dani is good because he has been there [at Honda] so many years and he understands it. Marc is just a freak; he doesn't really understand it that much, he's just fast. I don't think there is anybody else who can do a better job than me on the Honda.

**So was it weird to go from the extremes of being told to finish a race and then getting to a point where you are winning and breaking records? Of having two types of fuss around you...**

It depends on who you are talking about though because if you mean the media then I am quite good at having them on my side as opposed to having them against me. I think they understand situations and racing a little bit whereas fans are completely different. It's like football; they'll support you if you're winning but if you're losing they don't give a s\*\*t and I'm not talking about everybody because they are many great fans out there and will always be loyal no matter how many times you crash or bad results: they'll always be your fan. But then you have the people who say 'he's useless, finished, blah, blah' and then you win and they want a selfie and a hug. You have to be able to accept that. It's like Marc when he crashed in Australia and the 'fans' are clapping him because he's on his head. Do you think if he walked past them then they wouldn't ask for a picture? You know me, and people will either like me or they don't but I tell the truth... and that's the truth. Unless it comes from my close-knit group of people – my wife, Christian, Bob, my old manager, my friends Jake and people like that, my team also – when they say I am not doing something right or I'm upsetting people then at the end of the day what others say or think does not affect my life one bit."





Unwittingly emphasising a point, Crutchlow briefly breaks off to earnestly smile, say hello and sign a photo for a fan before turning around in his chair and coming back to the conversation. Occasionally his talk might seem abrasive but tiny moments like that show that he has a genuinely deep appreciation for the people that desire a few seconds of his time and attention. Crutchlow can be a 'quote machine' and often bounce away on spiky tangents of verbal consciousness; it is a dimension of his professional existence that coincides with his duties to fans and sponsors as well as his defining acts on the motorcycle and the sporting field. He can rile as much as he provokes reverence...but is strangely admired for his outspokenness. The rat-a-tat of his comments somehow compliments the twitches and flicks of his motorcycle handling prowess.

**Is it fair to say that this year was a bit of a breakthrough and that you arrived to a point you'd been striving for since you came to MotoGP?**

I won a race – two – which is more than four-five other factory riders this year. I had an objective this season and I always keep my goals, as such, close to my chest because they are personal. For sure everyone aims to win the championship but the reality is that it's gonna be difficult. I aim to win a race every year but I said to myself 'this year I really want to have one' and I was pleased I got one in the wet and another in the dry. I don't think I am better this season than any other. Even in the Ducati year [2014] I was riding strong...I was not riding a good bike, simple as that. I should have won when I was at Tech3 but I had to wait a bit longer.



## THE WINNER: CAL CRUTCHLOW

**The group you mentioned earlier as well as life and cycling on the Isle of Man is part of the small bubble you have around you. Winning in MotoGP takes you far outside the bubble. Did you get a grasp of that wider impact?**

I've always done the same thing. In my close-knit group as well is Mark [Cavendish, Pro cyclist]. He understands a lot more about racing than people would think and he rings me at the end of the race weekend and ask questions...probably because he wants to race in MotoGP! We have the same sort of mentality. We have busy schedules but I ride with him when I can, which is still a lot over a year. I have another friend – Andy – who I cycle with a lot and I told him before I left for the flyaways [Japan, Australian, Malaysia] I was aiming for a podium in Japan - and I should have had it but I ran off the track, my own mistake - and a win in Australia. And I did it. I had it in my head that I'd win there and I'd already won at Brno. The first text message I got was from him saying 'you already said it'. Sometimes you just have the mentality. Then, of course, you can say 'why not think like that every race?' but it doesn't work like that. I don't think anything has changed much for me. I train the same every year. The only big thing was Willow being born and that has probably made me a bit calmer. Not calmer on the bike or in my life generally but I'd say I'm less tense. Don't get me wrong: I have more grey hairs now! I have another person to provide for. You have to look after something that I don't really have any idea how to look after!

**Seeing that little person must be the ultimate reality check after coming back from a Grand Prix...**

I believe that a lot of the guys here don't have a kid firstly because they cannot hold down a serious girlfriend as they think a relationship affects their life. Honestly, that's my feeling, and I've been there also. I was with Lucy and I was selfish but she was willing to put up with it. I think those guys also believe a kid would affect their career. What I don't understand is that some have 50-60 million in the bank...so why be so worried about winning again? That's not going against one rider or another because many have fortunes in the bank. Enough to sit, have a kid and do something else. Motorcycle racers are selfish and me included. But I can tell you now that I've still had good results after Willow was born.

**What about fatherhood then? I mean you want your kids to be proud of you...**

Yeah...I'm lucky to have had Luce with me for so many years. You know me; I always have my feet on the ground. I don't drive a Ferrari – even though I could – and having a kid settles you down even more. I won in Australia and on the last lap I was honestly thinking 'f\*\*k, those two are not here' because they were travelling to Malaysia to see me and were on the plane as I won the race. I'd won...but I was disappointed they weren't there. Your mindset changes. If it was just Luce and I there then I would have been much more ecstatic than I was. The first thing you think is 'I hope they landed OK'. The win was the win and once I knew they were OK then I kinda enjoyed things a bit more, well, I went straight to the airport to get the plane to Malaysia. Things and your priorities in life change. Winning the race in Brno...I think doing that three years ago would have felt a lot different to now.



The feeling [of victory] was nothing compared to when Willow was born. Luce and I have to remind each other that we love each other to because when something comes into your world that takes up so much of your love...we know we are lucky.



**Watching Mark at the Olympic Games in the summer you probably had the same emotion and excitement as many people back home in the UK. Can you imagine the same reactions to your progress and achievements at Brno and Phillip Island?**

My first comment towards that is I watched the Olympics and was disappointed because I knew Mark would be disappointed. He went there for gold and came out with silver and he was by far the better rider, he just made a mistake and dropped to the apron. It makes me proud to watch my friend compete but do I think people feel the same with me? Not really...the only sensation you get of something like that is when you are on the big screen and you can see yourself but then you think 'f\*\*k, don't make a mistake, you're on TV!' Mark and I are competitive against each other and I know how much he put into those events. Racing the road all year and then switching to the track? That's like me doing motocross all year and then going to do a MotoGP race. Or him doing mountain bike or another completely different discipline. The time he spent away from the family to train at the track in Manchester was not easy. He should have won the world championship with his eyes closed.

**Lastly are you aware that you've firmed your legacy in this sport and left a mark. You've made a footprint regardless of what happens next...**

Yes...but I don't care too much about it. I'm not here to look at numbers and say 'I won this amount of races or had this amount of points or podiums...' I never look at statistics. I just try my best on the day and that's it. If I feel at the end of the day that I have the best result I could make and my team has done their best then I'm happy. If that's an eighth place then so be it. But if I feel I, or the team, could have improved then I might be more disappointed. I don't care too much for the end of season stats. At the end of the day I'm not Barry Sheene and I'm nowhere near his stature and stuff like that; I've won two MotoGP races! What I will say is that everyone goes on about the 'British Battle' all the time and there is no battle as far as I'm concerned. We are not even in the same speed and if they [the other Brits in MotoGP] jumped on my bike so you'd see. It is always hyped up...but I will say I would have been very pissed off if I hadn't been the first to get the win because I feel like I deserve it a lot more. I've never had a lucky podium or something given to me. I don't want to take anything away from those guys because I enjoy sharing the track with them and I'm good friends with Bradley. It is not a dig. It is about feeling like you deserve something. I feel that I can stop right now and be happy with my career. Will I? I don't know. If I wake up in two weeks time and decide I don't want to any more then I know it won't.

With that Crutchlow has to sign-off and move onto the next journalist waiting patiently for some of the 'world according to Cal'. In 2016 the Midlander has made sure that his somewhat unique perspective – certainly in MotoGP – has become that little bit more indispensable.



THE WINNER: CAL CRUTCHLOW





## PRODUCTS

### 100%

Some performance and lifestyle eyewear options from goggle masters 100% and thoughts for late Christmas gifts. The images here represent our pick of the respective models but the depth of choice for lens and frame colours and combinations is vast on the website and it's hard not to imagine at least several models catching the eye, so to speak.

The performance models include the 100% UV protection **Speedcoupe** (with long and short Dalloz – a sunoptics facility in France - lens configuration) with a rimless design for unobstructed view, Megol rubber coated nose pads and temple arms, extra space between the lens and face for increased airflow, temple arm scoops for a secure fit, anti-reflective interior surface and hydroleophobic exterior coating plus a full range of interchange lenses for all light conditions. Overall the 'look' is less extreme than the Speedcraft but is still a decent eyewear for sport activities (ski season anyone?). Expect to pay between 155-175 dollars. A more informal model is the **Type-S** boasting a light weight and dual-tone and translucent frames. All lenses are oleophobic & hydrophobic (front) anti-reflective (back) treated. There are initially seven schemes and designs to chose from for 130 dollars. There are eight different lifestyle glasses and we quite like the look of the **Higgins** (below, 90 dollars) and the Spectrum Graphite would be on our list for St Nicholas. Browse the full range at:

[www.ride100percent.com](http://www.ride100percent.com)



**Speedcoupe**







Type-S











**“I LIKE TO  
DESTROY  
BOUNDARIES  
BETWEEN ME AND  
PEOPLE...”**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:  
FRANCO MORBIDELLI  
[NOT YOUR AVERAGE MotoGP RACER]**

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Monster Energy



**T**his year the last five rounds of MotoGP visited Spain (twice), Japan, Australia and Malaysia and there is only one rider from all three classes of Grand Prix that lifted a podium trophy in each race of the continent-hopping stint. 21 year old Estrella Galicia 0,0 Marc VDS star Franco Morbidelli wanders into the compact team hospitality at a sunny Valencia for the 2016 curtain closer. The unit carries a busy but polished vibe. Surfaces shine, food platters entice and stocked fridges unquench thirst.

Seeming very much part of the furniture, Franco is of (half) Italian stock and is a highly rated member of Valentino Rossi's VR46 Academy; unearthing the next generation of motorcycle racing gems. This presents a challenge for #21 to stand out from the wealth of his co-'pupils', countrymen and Spanish youngsters breaking lap-records in the Moto3 and Moto2 categories on the scrabble to reach the peak of MotoGP. Morbidelli has etched a curious profile however not only thanks to a sterling second half of 2016 in Moto2 where he was one of the highest points scorers (and just missed out on third spot in the championship standings, mainly due to a slow and irregular start to his maiden year with the title-winning team) but also courtesy of an exciting riding style, easy demeanour and an articulacy unusual for his profession and certainly his age group.

Morbidelli is keen to walk the Ricardo Tormo circuit at Valencia and has also been told he has another media commitment before the Spanish sun threatens to dip on the eve of the Grand Prix. He sits to negotiate the interview – a process he has to become more and more familiar with as his sporting success increases – and he warms up considerably as conversation goes on. Before we know it a good twenty-five minutes have passed and the Tavullia resident is tight for time. Franco carries a youthful confidence despite his surprising claim to be “insecure” and there is evident single-mindedness towards his career...but also a degree of innocence. Morbidelli is rela-

tively new to the MotoGP world that can ruin as well as reward and the margins to prosper can be so tight. He still has to drink-in the thrill of his first Grand Prix win but after two campaigns and nine rostrum appearances is now prepped to nestle in the big time. 2016 Moto2 World Champion Johann Zarco has publicly given the nod towards Franco's chances come the start of another exciting term in the intermediate division in Qatar next March.

### **What a recent run of form. How did that come together?**

It was about balance. I found a balance at home, with my training, with my lifestyle and with my team also. We made progress with the bike and the set-up and our communication. Everything came together and this allowed us to make good results in a row. We were able to be consistent. We know each other more and we are working together well. We 'found' each other!

### **Did you make some kind of mental switch to reach that level of performance?**

It wasn't really a switch but something we built up from the beginning of the year. We made a couple of mistakes but I think this is quite normal when you are in a new team and surrounded by new people. I am a guy who takes things step-by-step and doesn't rush too much. We got better and better but then hit a few mistakes and had to look at what we were doing... but then we were able to come up again and now I'd say we are consistently near the top.

### **Are you an athlete that likes to analyse...Do you think about things quite a lot?**

[smiles] I try not to! Sometimes thinking too much makes you lose a bit of focus and the important thing is to be fast on the track no matter what. I am also a guy that likes to analyse and I want to properly know what is going on under my ass! And what will happen if we make a modification. I fully trust my team and I'm really confident what they do will end well.





FRANCO MORBIDELLI









FRANCO MORBIDELLI

**"I THINK THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST ADRENALINE  
FUELLED THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO...JUST  
GOING ON A BIKE GETS THE ADRENALINE GOING  
ANYWAY & TO MOVE AT A CERTAIN SPEED IS NOT  
SOMETHING YOU DO EVERYDAY..."**



**Do you have a way to escape the demands and focus of racing?**

This year I had the luck that a friend came with me to the races and that helped switch off once the day is done. We talk about a lot of things and it helps to get rid of the stress and things you think about during the day in the paddock.

**Such as?**

We love sport in general...so a lot of football-  
**Roma or Lazio for you?**

Roma! We talk about other sports as well whether its golf, Olympics or whatever.

**Your 'job' is pretty exhilarating. Can you explain what it feels like and what drives you?**

I think this is one of the most adrenaline fuelled things that you can do. Just going on a bike gets the adrenaline going anyway and to move at a certain speed is not something you do everyday. To think about it makes me really enjoy this sport. Of course sometimes you struggle and you don't have fun, you crash and have pain and you have to get back on the bike but this sport is really special. Thinking about it gives extra value to what I am doing [with my life]. There is the pressure to do well and I feel it...but at the moment not too much! I think real pressure will come when you need to win a championship and there are some vital moments to deal with.

**So maybe as soon as next year...**

I hope so! Sometimes with the pressure you can do quite badly but then you can also achieve things that you didn't know was possible.

**Is it still possible to have fun at this level?**

Yes, I'm really having fun and especially the last races I've had such a good time with the team. As I said I think I found the right balance because I am not too stressed. I'm relaxed and do my best every single lap and practice. I try to improve on any weaknesses...it has been a great time.

**How do you think people see you? Some young, crazy guy or someone articulate and smooth on the bike? In this sport – especially as an Italian – it must be hard to make your own identity...**

I think people see me as kinda mellow and I'm like that. I'm a quiet guy. I don't worry too much about things. My identity is a bit of a mess because I am half Brazilian and half Italian and in Italy I am half from Rome and half from Pesaro! I don't have a fixed origin. I am a big mix! And I like that. I like to destroy the boundaries between me and the person I am talking with and so languages is a great tool. With a Spanish guy I try to speak Spanish, with a French guy in French...I like to feel closer to the person I am talking with.

**What about the VR46 academy? How is that experience? It seems to be more of a lifestyle than a training group...**

It is a lifestyle. I have the luck to live there but some of the other riders from different areas had to come to that zone in Pesaro to be there. It is a lot of fun and you live it everyday. You train and you live for your sport, for the bike. Everything you do is to get to the top level in this place [MotoGP]. So it is a lifestyle but it is not too hard! I don't train at 6am for many hours. We live and train and it feels good and easy.

**How long have you been based there?**

I'm twenty-one now...so eleven years. I feel great there. I love the quiet, the nice landscapes and the seaside and all this stuff. I love being there. Misano is close. Overall it is a nice zone of Italy because you are five minutes from the sea and then not far at all from the mountains. You have a lot of choice: mountain bike, skiing...but I like more the beach!

**You had a pretty bad crash doing motocross last year. How do you feel about that sport now? Too risky after seeing what happened in the accident?**

I like motocross...but especially after the injury



I had to step back a little. I've ridden motocross since I was eleven; which is not long actually. To be really good at motocross I think you need to start earlier. Being a Pro racer you go to do motocross with other people who are fast and it makes a switch go in your mind because I want to be as fast as them but I don't have the skills. It is really risky and I make mistakes, sometimes you can end up on the ground with a broken leg.

### How did it happen?

The bike slid on a jump take-off and I landed badly. My foot slipped off the peg and stamped into the ground. You know I still like motocross and I follow the sport. I admire those guys. Now though I do 'softcross'! There is a track at The Ranch that doesn't have any big jumps and I carry on riding there in an easier way.

### How do you find and build confidence? Is it a physical thing or mental?

Results give me confidence-  
More than a good feeling on the bike?  
Yeah. I'm insecure, so when I see that things are good on the paper [results sheets] then I am really sure that what I have done is good. Actually the only thing that matters is the paper. If you are feeling good and confident but

the paper doesn't show it then it's not a good thing. Feeling great and seeing the proof is how you build up confidence, and going into a race you know what you can do and what you can aim for.

### That's a hard line...

Yeah, it's really hard. If you feel good but it is not working then you have made a mistake somewhere or you have lost yourself.

### With complete respect you are kinda like a baby in this world; just two Grand Prix seasons now. Are you set for the next step your results and riding profile are bringing?

I'm curious to see that. I don't know but I think I am ready. I have to be in the actual situation to judge it. As you said I'm really young and have only been a professional racer for three years actually. I haven't been in many really stressful situations...but then again I have because whether it was mini-bikes or Pre-GP 125s I had to fight many times – luckily – for championships. OK, they are not world championships but they were important at the time. I'm really looking forward to being in those kinds of positions again.





### SCOTT SPORTS

Winter fills one of Scott Sports' four main areas on their website (Bike, Running and Moto-sports being the other three). So two options here for chillier days in their on-road 2017 collection. The Pro DP Blouson is made from 600D polyester fabric with a breathable wind and waterproof z-liner Dryosphere membrane. It weighs under 2kg and has a removable thermal lining. There is a soft fleece collar, stretch panels and SAS-TEC protectors on the shoulders and elbows, reflectors and a total of four pockets. Bottom half and we actually own a pair of the Scott Denim Pants; an unmistakable jean look but with 8oz denim and aramid fabric for resistance. The composition is 100% cotton – so a soft and stretchy feel. The SAS-TEC protectors in the knee take a bit of comfort-fitting around the Teramid reinforcements but once on the bike the extra bulk is hardly noticeable and also doesn't bother when walking around after a ride. They look pretty good, fit well (our 34-34 is regular and without any fit surprises) and can be worn with a belt.

There is a treasure-trove of items on the website for any kind of activity and the performance of Scott's wares means gift choices are pretty easy!

[www.scott-sports.com](http://www.scott-sports.com)









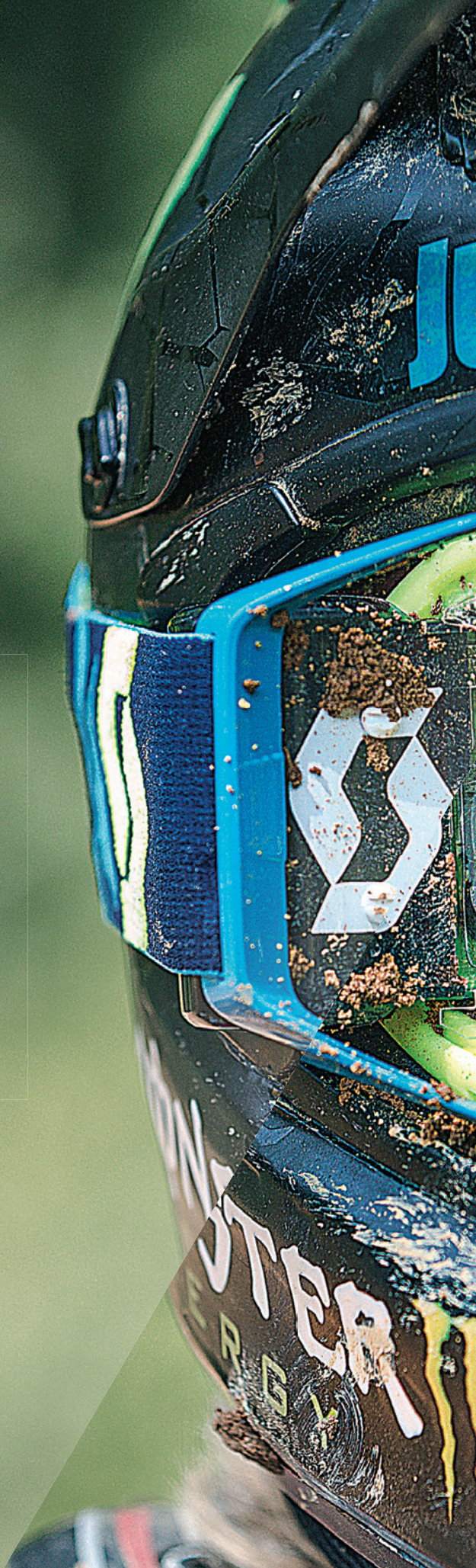


# DEFEND YOUR VISION

**PROSPECT**

**NO SHORTCUTS**

—  
40 years of Goggle research and design have all led to the introduction of our newest and most advanced MX goggle to date. The SCOTT PROSPECT offers a Massive field of vision, 50mm Works Film Systems and our proprietary Lens Lock System, giving you the ability to focus on what matters.







▶ JUSTIN BARCIA



# 2016 SURPRISES...

By David Emmett

**T**he end of the year is traditionally a time to look back and review the season that has just passed. Though I am no great lover of tradition, my last column of 2016 seems like a good place to go over some of the things which I didn't expect this year. So here are my 'surprises' of the year...

## **The maturity of Marc Márquez**

Rostrum or hospital: that was Marc Marquez' modus operandi for his first three seasons in MotoGP (and come to think of it, his years in 125s and Moto2 as well). But after winning his first two championships in a row, he fell short in 2015, by trying to override an unwilling bike and crashing in the process. The lesson Marquez learned was that he hated losing championships even more than he hated losing races (riders do not race because they love winning, but because they hate losing). In 2016, he put this lesson into practice: instead of crashing trying to win, he stayed on and finished. He even accepted finishing fourth and fifth (the horror! The horror!). Few thought Marquez could tame his impetuous nature. He proved us wrong.

## **Jorge Lorenzo and the Michelins**

When Jorge Lorenzo imposed his will on the MotoGP field at Qatar, it looked like the Movistar Yamaha rider was on a path to repeat his championship-winning performance from the previous year. Putting that win together with his dominance at the Sepang test had everyone braced for a runaway year for Lorenzo. Then in Argentina, Scott Redding's rear tyre exploded, and Michelin swung their tyre design in a much harder direction. Lorenzo no longer had the edge grip he needed to carry his trademark corner speed. The Michelin wet tyres were even worse for him: the tread moved so much

he could not feel the limit, and it took him several races to get his head around them. Luckily (and unluckily) for Lorenzo, it rained a lot, so he got plenty of practice, but that also meant he had a lot of mediocre results. On his day, Jorge Lorenzo is the fastest motorcycle racer in the world. But his failure to manage the Michelins saw him come up very short in the title chase.

## **The Pramac Ducati GP15s finishing behind Ducati GP14.2s**

Pramac Ducati is still very much the junior Ducati factory team. Pramac is run with a lot of support from the Bologna factory, and given the next best equipment. Ducati has a major say in rider signings, the idea being that the team is a place to put talent with potential to move up to the factory team in the future. So it has been a major disappointment that both Scott Redding and Danilo Petrucci finished behind the two-year-old Ducati GP14.2 machines of Hector Barbera and Eugene Laverty. Not just in the championship: on ten out of the eighteen races, Barbera or Laverty finished ahead of at least one Pramac rider. There were plenty of reasons for this: Petrucci was carrying a hand injury early in the season, and missed several races. Redding had a surprising amount of mechanical misfortune through the year. But the fact was that two riders regarded as young talents were regularly beaten by old men on old bikes. Both Laverty and Barbera are extremely underrated riders, but that simply shouldn't happen.

## **Franco Morbidelli**

The Moto2 championship in 2016 looked a little too much like 2015. Same faces, same names, and in the end, the same champion as last year. The





exception was Franco Morbidelli, the Italian who had switched from the mid-pack Italtrans team to former champions Marc VDS Racing. Morbidelli made the step forward that was expected of him going to a more competitive team, ending the year with eight podiums and finishing just a single point shy of Alex Rins, the man the media have anointed a future superstar. Though Morbidelli did not win a race, he all too often put the established stars such as Rins, Tom Luthi, Johann Zarco and Sam Lowes to shame. The chirpy Italian starts 2017 as title favourite. The tables have now been turned.

### **The irresistible rise of Brad Binder**

What a difference a win makes. Brad Binder was a rider who was there or thereabouts, but always seemed to lack that final edge, the difference between winning and losing. He started the season in the running for the Moto3 title, but nobody expected him to run away with it. That all changed after his astounding win at Jerez. He found out he had to start from the back of the grid just after morning warm up, over a trivial infraction (a misnamed ECU software map). He sliced through the field like a hot knife through butter, got to the front, realised he was faster than everyone else, and cleared off. From that moment on, he was the man to beat, almost always in the top three or four every lap, winning eight races, only missing out on the podium in three. Binder clinched the title at Aragon, with four races to go. He rode a near-perfect season, something not expected of a Moto3 rider. "He is a warrior, he will sacrifice anything to win" team boss Aki Ajo told me. Watch out for how he progresses in Moto2.

### **Fabio Di Giannantonio – the non-VR46 Italian**

It is impossible to overstate just how important Valentino Rossi's VR46 Rider Academy has been to the revitalisation of Italian racing. Rossi's academy has produced a seemingly unending supply of young Italian talent. Fabio Di Giannantonio's rise has been all the more remarkable for the VR46 operation not having had any part in his success. The Italian – God, how we non-Italian journalists sweated over the jumble of A's, N's, and O's in that name – was the revelation of the Moto3 class, adding consistency to his outright speed. He was meant to be the junior teammate of Enea Bastianini, but Di Giannantonio was so much more. Smart, articulate, with impeccable English and astounding speed, Di Giannantonio is a sign of the rude health of Italian racing.

### **Romano Fenati – Paradise Lost**

Romano Fenati probably peaked too early, and has suffered the consequences ever since. Second in his first ever Grand Prix, a winner in his second, the world was Fenati's oyster. The problem was, he wasn't ready for such success at the tender age of 16, and it all went to his head. He was rebellious, difficult to work with, and always seemed to manage to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. The Sky VR46 team was meant to get him into line, and focus his mind on winning, but that all fell apart at mid-season. After one argument too many, and a refusal to abide by the rules of the team, Fenati was sacked, and sent home. It was a miserable temporary end to a promising career, and a salutary lesson on the value of self-discipline. We will see if he has really learned his lesson in 2017.



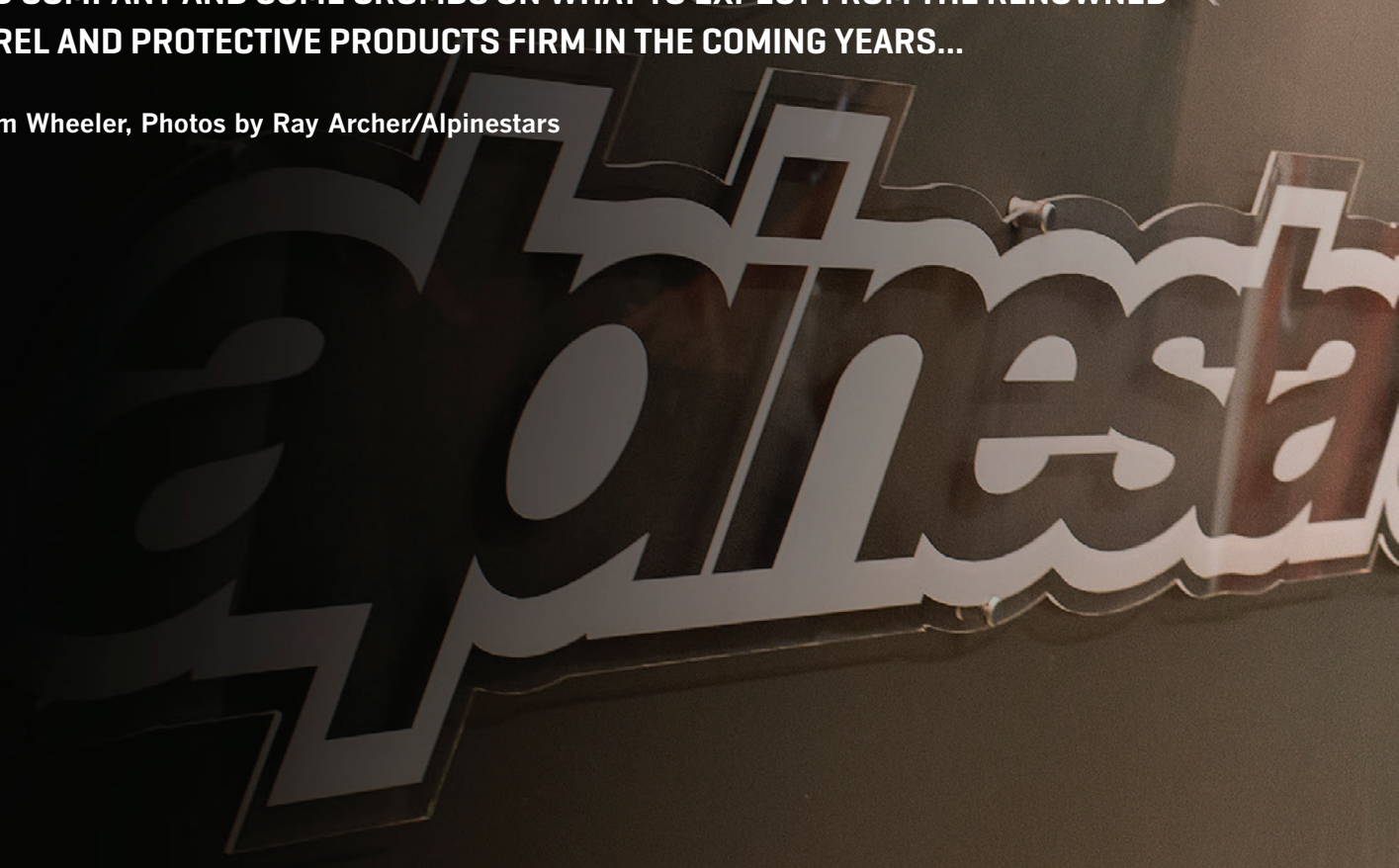


FEATURE

# SPOTLIGHT: GABRIELE MAZZAROLO

ALPINESTARS' CHIEF, OVERSEER, PURE RACING ENTHUSIAST AND PASSIONATE MOTORCYCLIST SITS DOWN FOR A RARE CHAT ABOUT 2016 FOR THE ASOLO-BASED COMPANY AND SOME CRUMBS ON WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE RENOWNED APPAREL AND PROTECTIVE PRODUCTS FIRM IN THE COMING YEARS...

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer/Alpinestars





**SPOTLIGHT: GABRIELE MAZZAROLO**





**O**h, to spend a week in Gabriele Mazzarolo's shoes. We frequently see the tall Italian at a myriad of race events whether its supercross, MXGP or MotoGP. The trips between Alpinestars' offices and development facilities in Italy and the United States means that the well-connected Mazzarolo is a man constantly on the move. If not working on a plane, hotel or race paddock somewhere (he is also a frequent visitor to F1) then he's blurring around the roads on a KTM or perhaps one of the newly released Honda RC213V-S; he cannot resist a smile when we ask what the MotoGP-replica feels like.

It might seem like Mazzarolo has an idyllic life orientated around racing but the man also has to control an operation famed as much for its innovation and quality as for its style and presence. Although he has been embedded in the business created by his father Sante in the early 1960s from a young age, Mazzarolo has dictated paths of modernisation and made key judgment calls on wares (the Tech 10 motocross boot is the first that comes to mind) and product development that have helped shape what we see motorcyclists wearing and using on tracks and roads right now. It's not an exaggeration to say that the thoughts and opinions in his head contain clues to some of the protective measures and aesthetics that will pervade the motorcycle industry in the next half a decade or more (helmets anyone?).

We sit down to talk in his bright and sparse office in the Alpinestars hospitality unit in the MotoGP paddock. Gabriele has the standard issue 'Astars' white shirt in place and has been busy at Valencia with meetings and facetime with the raft of familiar people and athletes that populate the tables, three dark sofas and keep the culinary staff working through the day and evening. 2016 has been a decent year on the racetrack with MotoGP, MXGP, Dakar, WorldSBK, MX2 and Moto3 titles in the bag. How has it been otherwise though?

### **First of all give me an impression of how 2016 has been for Alpinestars...?**

Very strong. We have a lot of projects and of course, I'm working on 2018. 2016 was 'done' a couple years ago in terms of what I do specifically but for the company. I'm very happy that a lot of projects we started a long time ago are all coming to fruition and that's significant for us. We have other things that we have started with which are not coming to market yet, so for sure we are have a very strong growth base for products. I look at that and have a good opinion but then I am also very much interested in what we will do next.

### **Is there anything behind the scenes that has changed for 2017-18? Has R&D grown a little bit more or have you put more resources in one particular area or any new priorities?**

Our staff grew in the past eighteen months by fifty people and in Italy it's mostly R&D and the racing. So it grew ostensibly, particularly in electronics, but it's not so different from the past because we are [constantly] looking for the right people for development and it's our natural plan. So there is progression... but mostly it's through R&D.





**Is electronics something difficult to get into? It must be exciting when it comes to the possibilities but then needs acute specialists and resources...**

It is exciting. We do things in-house so we have a lot of knowledge over the past fifteen years. Of course we have our suppliers for components or for hardware but it doesn't seem that difficult because you can really achieve so many things and complex things as well. Having the knowledge in this field is important but actually it's really nice how things progress so fast.



**Alpinestars are usually the first, or among the leaders of this technology, for motorcycle riders. It's not like you can look around at competition and react. So it's almost a big position of responsibility as well. When you do it, you have to get it right...**

Having so many people racing [with us] is just a natural environment and in racing you get a lot of ideas and things progress fast: and that's how we are as well. It is part of the way we do things. Yes, as motorcycle users, we also want to make things more comfortable and practical but a lot of performance, safety, motivation or speed can also come into racing. Being so close to racing makes it nicer for us to be developing first.

**Is Alpinestars moving in one particular direction with the product range? Is it moving more towards technology and more R&D in one special area? Alpinestars is world famous for boots, for riding gear, for leathers, and they suddenly become specialists in potential electronics. Is it almost like a risk?**

It seems like everything is about racing but our other interests are motorcycles and car racing motorsports. We are leading in motorcycles on the fashion front for thirty years. In the mid-90s, when we started doing motorcycle apparel I did that in a different building with completely different people. So we always stayed really focussed on motorcycle footwear and then auto racing - with a different team - and then protection, the same. Now there are more things we can do, like helmets for example, that a different team would be dedicated to. Alpinestars is like a lot of 'companies' [together] and I'm very keen on keeping the teams completely focused on just the one thing they do. So they never have people crossing over. The product teams for development are really focused on that one activity; that's how we do it. For auto racing, for example, we started in 2002, we have world champions so far almost every year but that team is 100% dedicated to auto racing. They have nothing to do with motorcycling. The lab can maybe study something for auto racing which is very lightweight and also beneficial to motorcycling. For example, it is very important to eliminate friction heat from a suit in motorcycle racing. So there are some side benefits but the teams are so focused on that one thing.

**Tell me a bit about the relationship with KTM. There is a good history between the companies but it seems to be getting deeper. What is the motivation for that?**

It was deep from the beginning. KTM have been able to see how we work and that really gave them motivation to do a lot more with Alpinestars. They are really focused on motorcycles and technology and they're a really fast developing company and they had an opportu-





**"WE'RE REALLY PROUD OF THE RIDERS WITH US. JONATHAN IS VERY SPECIAL, VERY MEANINGFUL TO US, TO ME AND THE COMPANY. JEFFREY IS SIMILAR AND FOR WHAT HE WENT THROUGH [TWO YEARS OF INJURY]...ALL OF THEM ARE GREAT FOR US..."**



SPOTLIGHT: GABRIELE MAZZAROLO





nity to see that Alpinestars is also like that as well, only applied to apparel. The goal is very similar: we really want to attract more people to motorcycling and we are really based on racing. From that, we draw for the development side of things.

**What do you think will be the big benefit for Alpinestars in doing more things together?**

Of course for protection and motorcycling we are at just the very first baby steps. There is an airbag that can be seen as a huge achievement, but in reality, the product has been in racing only for six years and on the road for only two years so we really are in the first steps of development. And of course we have our own electronic side of things. So for sure, there are things that will happen and we can do together to make some developments much faster, even better.

**Do you think the companies are similar in some ways, in philosophy?**

I think they are very similar. And of course, I have to be humble and not give myself a big compliment because KTM is phenomenal but it's amazing how cool they are. Our [joint] ambitions are strong. They bring more people to riding with something really good. That was our idea or goal as well. So our companies are very close and similar.

**Can you talk a bit more about the off-road airbag? Is that the most ambitious project Alpinestars has at the moment?**

No, because it's not difficult technically to develop it further having already had it for the street and for racing. If we adapt that for other types of rider then it's again easier because they are already used to wearing a jacket. Of course in motocross [in the past] the top riders had to wear a jersey. Now they have to wear a protector as well so they're getting used to that. So on the hardware part, it is not going to be difficult. There will be a bit of weight because it weighs more than nothing! But for the hardware part it's not very complicated. We are doing it already for almost three years.

**Do you think people will judge it quite strongly in off-road? When it hits the market people will be like: "Does this work? Will it work? Will it keep me safe?"...**

I don't see that as an issue. Of course the product will speak for itself and it could be a product that you wear under something else. I agree about people having their view. You could say the same thing about racing for the street but it really quickly became a standard: that no rider would be happy to go to a leathers company without an airbag today. Without it, you are really sub-standard, not the other way around. I think that it would be accepted quickly...but we have to make sure we have it working perfectly when we start to introduce it to the market.

**Any chance you could you give a rough estimation of when?**

I'd rather not because I don't like to do things because of time pressure. Like the air bags for example, we took two years more than other companies to introduce ours because we had a completely full [product and fashion] base





## SPOTLIGHT: GABRIELE MAZZAROLO

and this was in addition. So for off-road, we are complete with what we have so I have the luxury of not having to make it by that date, or that quarter, or that year. Other companies have financial goals to make and we have our own goals.

**I know how important racing is to Alpinestars. 2016 has been a year of diverse success from Toby Price to Jeffrey Herlings to Jonathan Rea to Marc Marquez to Brad Binder. How do you feel about how things have gone on the track and personally for you, if you had to pick one highlight, what would it be?**

It's difficult because I'm here today at MotoGP and I'm proud of our team here. But it's not only the fact that we have riders...it is how happy they are to be with us. That makes all the difference. So we are not just a sponsor. We're really proud of them being with us. Jonathan is very special, very meaningful to us, to me and the company. Jeffrey is similar and for what he went through [two years of injury]. I was also happy to see Tim [Gajser, who wears the neck brace] succeed and Marc; what he had went through last year. A lot of them are great for us.

**Lastly, anything new in the garage? I heard a rumour that you bought an RCV. Is it any good?**

It is fantastic. I didn't think a motorcycle could be that good. In California, I had other bikes... but it's really great. It's that much better. The bike is in Italy but in California and the U.S. I have more options. I'm going to try Laguna Seca in December just for a few days. That should be fun.











## FLY RACING

Flicking through the casualwear on the Fly Racing website reveals a daunting array of apparel. The section is just one on offer, alongside Moto, MTB, BMX, Snow, Water, Street, and Hard Parts; just to give an indication of the depth of the catalogue. For wintry climes here is a selection of jackets. Starting with the **Composite** (140 dollars) that has a technical memory twill outer shell construction – providing maximum durability and, insulated quilted liner, a detachable hood, a lycra inner cuff with thumb hole and zippered hand warmers in the pockets: overall a sound choice to battle the elements. The **Factory** comes in at the same price but perhaps more for fans of the brand or younger customers thanks to the race graphic styling. 99 dollars brings in the Waxed jacket (in grey or black) with a fleece liner, zip entry cuff sleeves, a removable hood and epaulette detailing. We have (and like) the **Black Ops** jacket (80 dollars) which also comes in black. We're talking a light windbreaker that is also water-resistant (we haven't fully tested this aspect) and the fleece lined interior means it is surprisingly effective for autumn and spring temperatures.

Set aside five-ten minutes and have a full scope of the Fly range:  
[www.flyracing.com](http://www.flyracing.com)







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## MANNA FROM HEAVEN...

By Graeme Brown/GeeBee Images

**A**ll the racing is done and by now the winter shutdown is well and truly underway. It was always planned that I would write a few words at the end of the year but our esteemed editor asked me to think about something different.

So there I was mulling over the choice of Christmas jumper for the annual family small-talk championships and really having difficulty thinking of something to write about when BOOM!!! Last Monday the Gods of Writer's Block sent everyone with an interest in WorldSBK an early Christmas present. The Superbike Commission had met the previous Friday, enjoyed a sumptuous pre-Christmas lunch with party hats, crackers and a little bit of brandy butter for the pudding I like to imagine, and come up with some new regulations for 2017.

Imagine the horror: the use of scooters are to be banned for the purposes of track familiarisation!

Now, you thought I was going to mention the shake up of the grid places. Well, go on then...

By now you should all know what is going to happen. Good. Can you explain it to me please? To be fair the WorldSBK Press Office had clearly foresaw the potential confusion and have prepared a nice little explanatory video. At least someone knows how it is going to work. The big question was not how it would, however, but whether it should be happening at all.

Chaz Davies was the first to stick his head above the parapet. Whilst the motorcycle media and the twitterati were busy twisting and then double knotting their knickers, Chaz asked on Twitter "Thoughts on the new grid peeps? Could be fun". Inevitably there was mixed response but to be fair to Chaz he nailed his colours to the mast and said he saw merit in the idea. I spoke to him a couple of days later as I wondered if his comments were genuine or if he was just stoking the fire: "Nah GeeBee, not me style".

He understands that the fastest riders in race one will be penalised but he is also experienced enough to know that motorcycle racing is a business and to maintain the attraction to manufacturers, sponsors, TV companies etc it needs to be spiced up. He also acknowledged that this year it may have been boring for fans from other nations to see the same three Brits on the podium every other week and this is a chance to change things but not turn it completely on its head.

The general feeling amongst the riders I have spoken to is that there won't be too much of a difference in the overall results. Michael Van Der Mark said that at the moment a couple of manufacturers are very strong and whilst you will see a lot more overtaking in the first half of the race, the results will more or less be the same. He seemed more interested in whether or not Tissot would be giving out another watch for pole position in race 2.





Stefan Bradl told me that he was a little bit confused by it but in general thought it would be interesting for race two. Being completely new to the series he wasn't quite sure how it would work out but sounded philosophical in acknowledging that they will just have to manage the situation and deal with it.

***“It has long been discussed that WorldSBK riders are all too nice to each other...”***

I eventually spoke to Jonathan Rea after his championship party celebrations and he was less than complimentary. Then again he would be, he has the most to lose. He feels that since Dorna have taken over the running of the series and made a number of changes the ‘identity’ of Superbike is being eroded. Team-mate Sykes was equally as critical and responded to Davies on Twitter by asking “Do they all get pissed up in these WorldSBK meetings or what?” Both Kawasaki riders have a purist attitude that at this level a rider shouldn't be penalized for being the fastest.

But will the changes really make any difference to the podium places? Davies pointed out that in Phillip Island last year he started from ninth on the grid and came through to lead both races at one

point. He was relishing the challenge next year. Rea on the other hand was a bit more bullish: “The last time I saw a crazy rule like that was when I was seven in schoolboy motorcross. The last race of the day was a handicap and I would start at the back. I always won those races as well!” The difference now is that he will have the likes of Melandri, Laverty, Bradl, VD Mark in front of him, riders that are never too shy at getting the elbows out and trading paint.

That in itself maybe something that Dorna are trying to manufacture. It has long been discussed that WorldSBK riders are all too nice to each other. Maybe with a bit more elbow to elbow racing in race two there will be a few fall-outs and the media can then stir up some handbags at dawn.

If nothing more it has got people talking about Superbike throughout the winter break and there will be a high level of interest in the first race at Phillip Island in a few months time.

So now that that is done I can get back to choosing my sweater. I think I will also join Tom Sykes in finding out what was imbibed at the Superbike Commission. I think it might make my Christmas Day small talk a bit more interesting.

Have a wonderful Christmas and I will see you all in the New Year for another great season of racing.



## PRODUCTS

### THE BIKE SHED

As we mentioned in the ODFU section The Bike Shed has a well-stocked shop that warrants a visit to the facility alone, nevermind the tasty food (we recommend the Chicken burger) and custom bikes on display and the chance to get a trim. Brands like Furygan, Icon and Rokker sit alongside Roland Sands, Schott and Aero. TBS also has their own selection of tees, sweatshirts, hoodies, caps and other trinkets. Ducati and Triumph get the t-shirt treatment (30 pounds each) while the trucker camp comes at 25 pounds and in two colour options. The Bike Shed London 'Sweat' is pretty cool in grey and for 40 quid. The Club Sweat is a little more pricey and in black for 60. Everything can be ordered online. We've been able to check out the clothes first hand and can vouch for the quality and finish.

[shop.thebikeshed.cc/bike-shed-merchandise](http://shop.thebikeshed.cc/bike-shed-merchandise)  
[www.thebikeshed.cc](http://www.thebikeshed.cc)













BRAD BAKER

By Adam Wheeler  
Photos by Andrea Wilson

# HOLLOW TIPPED

AMERICAN FLAT TRACK STAR BRAD BAKER IS LOOKING TO CAUSE AS MUCH DAMAGE AS POSSIBLE IN THE AMA 2017 SERIES BUT THE RIDER WITH THE SAME AGE AS MARC MARQUEZ HAS BEEN TEARING UP OVALS AND DIRT IN A WINTER EUROPEAN SOJOURN IN RECENT WEEKS. ON THE EVE OF THE SUPERPRESTIGIO IN BARCELONA WE DECIDED TO ROUND UP THE BULLET'S VIEWS ON THE SPORT, INDIAN, MARQUEZ AND MOTOGP...





**T**he AMA Grand National Championship – now the American Flat Track Championship – used to be one of Grand Prix's richest pipelines. Times and technology changes but the series is still the home of the United States' fiercest motorcycle athletes and some phenomenal talent outside of Supercross stadiums and motocross national circuits. The 2017 competition will also re-stage one of the oldest manufacturing rivalries with Indian reinvigorated to go toe-to-toe with Harley Davidson and reignite a duel that pre-dates World War II. At the heart of the dispute across twenty rounds of mile, half-mile, TT (non-oval) and short track warfare will be 23 year old 2013 champion Brad Baker.

The Bullet has mainly competed with Harley and Honda machinery but will be Indian's star signing on the Scout FTR750 along with '16 champ Bryan Smith and Jared Mees; Smith triumphing in remarkable last lap, last corner style at Santa Rosa (watch it [HERE](#)).

A previous winner of the Barcelona Superprestigio (Marc Marquez's pet winter project, the fourth edition taking place this weekend in the Catalan capital) Baker was spotted at the final fixture of MotoGP at Valencia before a period of training and riding that would see him trade roost with Marquez at the HRC man's facility in Rufeá in the depths of western Catalunya, taste some of Spanish Champion Ferran Cardus' exhaust fumes as well as show Valentino Rossi a trick or two at 46's Ranch in Tavullia. Monster Energy's Baker will now put on a show for the fans at the Palau St Jordi before heading back to his home in Washington State prior to the Daytona TT on March 16 and the opening salvo of 'AFT'.

"For a long time in the states Brad has been seen as the Marc Marquez of flat track," says respected photo journalist Andrea Wilson, who has been working closely on the AMA series in 2016. "But his results fell off with the move to the factory Harley-Davidson team, with a mixture of injuries, mechanicals and bad luck.

He has a lot of raw talent and I think with the right tuner, someone to mentor him a bit, and modern machinery, he could be unstoppable.

"It will be interesting to see how he fits in at Howerton Motorsports, because although Ricky Howerton is Bryan Smith's tuner, Howerton runs the team and is one of the best in the business. As far as overseas, it's actually surprised me this trip to see how big he is in Europe. They treat him like a MotoGP rider."

Andrea kindly arranged for some press to spend time with Brad in the cosy confines of the Alpinestars hospitality in Valencia and where one of the major stars of the American scene gave his thoughts across a range of subjects...

#### **On the state of Flat Track...**

I think it is in pretty good shape right now. I think there is more momentum behind it than there has been for a long time. We've been in the X Games for the last few years and we're scheduled again for 2017. We'll be on national television with NBC Sports next year. We've got more rounds right now and it's growing; so it is a good season. There are lots of OEMs and quite a few sponsors in the paddock and lots of good riders. So the outlook is positive and you go to the international side of things and it is growing here in Spain and through Europe.

#### **On the reactions to the sport in the last few years...**

Many younger fans; that's something I've seen. 2011 was my first year as a rookie in Expert and 2009 was my first as a Pro and when I began I didn't really see a load of kids at the track. Now there are more and young adults as well. That's been one of the bigger changes at the fences and a really good one.

#### **On whether Dirt Track is simple for kids and juniors to pick up...**

I think it is easy. To road race you obviously have to have the facility and opportunity to do it; there are not many around while you





can build a dirt track in your back yard if you have more than an acre. No jumps either! So it is simple to make a circuit. Having a kid involved in any level of motocross is dangerous. I trained in motocross a lot and I'm a pretty decent rider. I can qualify in the local Pro class – well, I'm a slower Pro but faster Intermediate and I'd rather be a slower Pro! – and get around the track safely without looking like a goon. Sometimes at the local tracks you see three guys getting carted off in the first half hour with broken collarbones, arms or legs. For a rider to go and be comfortable on a new motorcycle then it [dirt track] is a lot safer and easier than entry level at motocross at any age.

#### **On his own roots...**

My Dad raced back in the 1970s-80s. He did a lot of scrambles and got me involved. I had a ten acre field as part of our property and it was pretty easy to cut a dirt track as my Dad operated heavy equipment his whole life. There are quite a few tracks and a good following for

the sport around Washington State and I pretty much started there and kept at it really.

#### **On his role promoting an American sport internationally...**

It's great that someone is doing and it and – selfishly – it's gaining exposure for myself but also momentum and awareness for the sport. Being intertwined with a lot of the MotoGP riders I can see that many of them want to train more [with flat track] and we are organising [meets, rideouts] more and more when I am over here. It is great to hook up with Marquez and then go somewhere like Rossi's Ranch. Perhaps I am a bit of a target when I ride with them! I feel like people want to gauge off me. They are all competitive motorcycle racers and whatever they are doing on a bike they want to see how fast they can go and how good they can be. They don't really have an absolute gauge of what they can do until they bring over someone of my calibre and who they know is setting the bar. They all kinda gun after myself.





**"THE RIVALRY IS GOING TO BE COOL AND A GOOD THING FOR THE SPORT. INDIAN GAINED A LOT OF EXPOSURE BACK IN THE DAY. IT WILL BE A SPARK... AND I'LL BE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT..."**



BRAD BAKER





## On tackling the Superprestigio on a small track compared to the long ovals of the States...

We actually race a lot of Indoor short tracks in Washington state and it is basically what I have done every winter since I was five. My first ever race was on an Indoor short track. I would probably have more of an advantage on a bigger track because they [MotoGP riders] don't race them but then nobody has more experience on a smaller track than myself.



## On racing a twin compared to a 450...

You can ride something like a twin but it doesn't make sense on anything less than a quarter mile just because a 450 is a better bike for a shorter track. There are only a few guys with the kind of dirt track experience now [in Spain] where I would think it was safe for them to take a twin for a spin. Ferran Cardus is the best dirt track racer that Spain has to offer and I'd like to get him over to the States. He will obviously be over in Daytona as a prize for winning the Spanish series but I'd like to see ride a full season...but he'd need that experience on a 450 on bigger tracks before getting on a twin. People get scared of the twins because of the power and the weight but they're actually pretty forgiving on the right race track. It's a motorcycle that is designed and built to race dirt track and it does have more horsepower but at the same time it still handles really well and isn't a hard motorcycle to ride.

## On MotoGP and analysing Marquez's style...

I think you can see some dirt influence... although he's had that style and it's not just because of dirt track. He has always had that ragged look where he is pushing the limits. He isn't afraid to let the bike be loose beneath him. I think the mentality he has also helps for dirt track but the more he rides the more comfortable he is with letting the bike 'hang out' and 'getting upset'. It feels natural to him now. I haven't ridden on the road for a while. When I was 12-13 I had 125s and 250s and then to a 600 but when I turned Pro at sixteen everything went to dirt track after that. It would have been cool to continue Supermoto or road racing but there wasn't much of it around, so I kept to dirt track and some motocross. I'd like to get back on the road this year and there are some things that can help me on the bigger mile tracks with corner speed and rolling the motorcycle into the corner a bit more than just sliding. Also there is the speed barrier: if you can get comfortable at 200mph then doing 140 will seem slow. Maybe it will slow down the pace of the race for me and I'll perceive and knick things quicker. It is one thing that I remember Chris Carr saying: that doing road racing in the early '00s meant he felt like a slug coming back to the mile! It might be a good thing for me.





**On the rivalry with Harley and Indian emerging in 2017...**

In flat track you'll have the top thirty-forty riders within the same second sometimes. There are very small margins and two tenths over ten laps is a straightaway in some places. The rivalry is going to be cool and a good thing for the sport. Indian gained a lot of exposure back in the day and a lot of people followed it because of that. It will be a spark...and I'll be right in the middle of it.



**On testing and set-up...**

It will be a lot of work but I think with the team I have and how good that motorcycle already was I think we will have a solid package right out of the truck...and then it is just about me having seat time and getting used to it. All the work will happen in the lead-up to the end of January and then more testing in February. We'll take our best shot at it and hope that not many changes have to be made that month. The tracks in the series are changing up a bit this year and we'll start with the [Daytona] TT; which is a small track with the bigger bike and something that hasn't been done for a long time. Everybody will be taking a shot in the dark. Daytona will be about whoever has the best database in their head and taking an educated guess at how the bike needs to be set for it. I think you will see the top teams like mine, Harley Davidson and some others come out of the box a little more prepared. It is actually good to be out testing because normally you'd have to develop a new bike at the races and this was the case with Harley Davidson in the last few years. I didn't have a whole load of testing with them on an XR-750 because the motorcycle was never really something they wanted to run too much. The bike had been developed a long time and I never really got much of a chance to ride, test and train. Now with the Indian and their technology and team I'll be able to get on it as much as I want and it will be a big help. I'm really looking forward to be able to ride the same motorcycle that I race. We only have three four-lap sessions at the races; so not much time to get going. In MotoGP they will have the same amount of time doing warm-up...but then they have had two days of practice!



## On road racers showing their habits in flat track...

You can see them! The way they have their shoulder tipped in. They're sat on the bike pretty well in terms of positioning but the way they tip their body in and the way elbows aren't up or they won't have a steel shoe on... you can tell from the styles. I think you can see an evolution with Marc and Valentino though. From the first year to the second of dirt track there was a progression there.

## On whether Marquez would qualify in a U.S. event...

On a short track and with a 450 then 'yeah'. Marc does really well at the Superprestigio but people have to understand that his personal race track at Rufeá is exactly the same size and same surface. He trains with an HRC bike on that track for a good majority of the year. That track, that type of motorcycle and with 17s [wheels] he's got it well-dialled in. Take him to a different sized track and different surface and it will be a whole other ball game. We're on 19s on the States. He went to The Ranch and was faster than Valentino at his own track so obviously Marc would be able to figure it out on a 450 no problems but I think he would be shaking in his boots if he got on a twin at a half mile or mile...just as if was going to get on his MotoGP bike and head out! Troy Bayliss is an example of someone who grew up racing those big oil tracks in Australia, which are fast and big and he took so much experience. The tracks here in Europe are normally small and tight. Bayliss definitely had a rude awakening when he jumped on a Ducati for the half mile and mile. It is a totally different world.

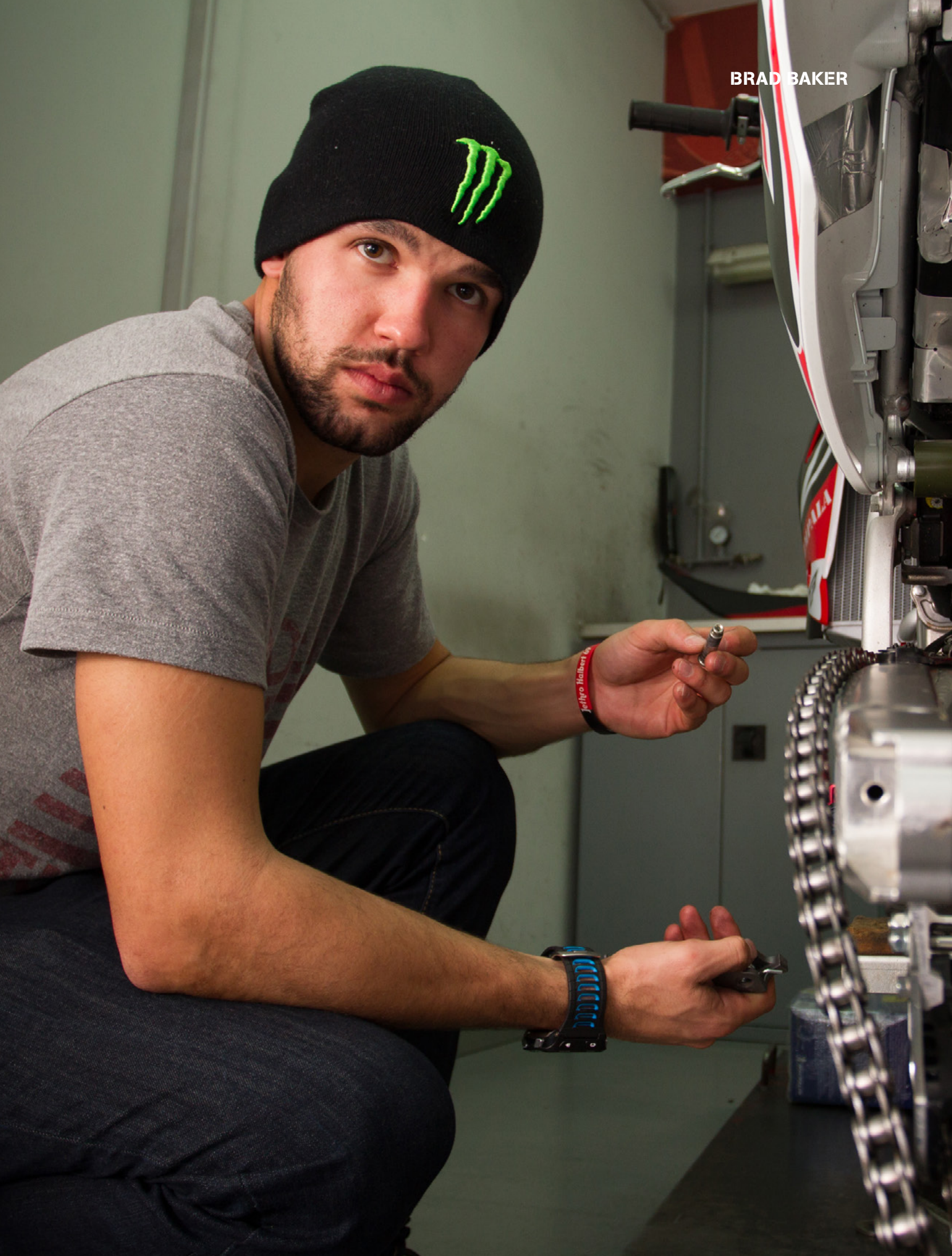
## On being a Monster Energy athlete...

It has been almost three years now. It is really cool and probably the biggest company I have linked up with in terms of an exposure side of things and being able to intertwine with different athletes and events. It's a huge scene in the States but also in Europe...





BRAD BAKER







## ANSWER

Christmas time and some choices aside from the sumptuous riding kit provided by Answer (who will be spotted on the Monster Energy DRT Kawasaki racing team in MXGP again in 2017 but also on a prominent factory squad; due for announcement on the first day of the new year). First, practicality with the Clear VYNL raincoat (29.95) in small and medium sizes and a length that will cover you until a pair of gum boots. Tall Moto Socks (17 dollars) will be useful for winter temperatures while the ANSR sweatshirt comes solely in black but features that strikingly logo (watch out for European and U.S. sizing though, best to check the Answer website for correct measurements). Then for t-shirts you have the blue Shield, the red Orbit and the black Stencil but these designs also come in other colour options and cost (29.95 dollars). For more info look at:











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# MXGP: TOP FIVE OF 2016

By Adam Wheeler  
Photos by Ray Archer

OUR VERDICT ON THE BEST AND MOST  
IMPRESSIVE RIDERS OF THE PREMIER  
CLASS OF THE FIM MOTOCROSS WORLD  
CHAMPIONSHIP THIS YEAR...













1

**TIM GAJSER****TEAM GARIBOLDI HRC****CHAMPIONSHIP POSITION: 1ST, GRAND PRIX WINS (FROM 18): 7, GRAND PRIX PODIUMS: 16**

Wow. But then again maybe we shouldn't have been that surprised. Tim Gajser's rivals were hardly shocked by the fact that he won his MXGP debut in Qatar or would figure so prominently at the front in MXGP. They pointed to his status as MX2 World Champion and the fact that the Slovenian had moved unbelievably quickly up the motocross ladder winning junior and European titles and Grands Prix on the way to the peak of MXGP at just nineteen years of age.

His preference for training on a CRF450R even while competing for two years with Honda in MX2 was the base for his positive feeling and familiarity come a jump into the premier class and on the bigger bike. The transition was slight, the testing with the accommodating Gariboldi team effective and the pressure removed, with Honda looking more at what Gautier Paulin could manage and how Evgeny Bobryshev would improve.

The same fearlessness, strength, relentlessness and potency that Gajser unveiled at Qatar to go 1-1 was the flavour of the season and the narrative of 2016. He admitted a degree of awe in facing the likes of Cairoli, Desalle and Paulin and some of the pillars of MXGP and did not know where his pace would land him in the MXGP pack, but it took only a few motos for the youngster to have a decent grasp. Unlike Romain Febvre in 2015 who built slowly into his maiden term and then exploded, Gajser set the stage from the very first drum roll and then had to cope with the intensity of the spotlight and the demands of being in every scene and every act. No circuit or rival seemed too daunting as the yellow #243 band of supporters seemed to grow at the fences; their boisterous presence as impactful as their hero's actions and seeming invincibility before them.

Some of Tim's trophies came unexpectedly. A big crash at Kegums in Latvia yielded a painful and surprisingly overall victory and he was also riding the edge too frequently in the first phase of the calendar. He posted four doubles – in Spain, Britain and Italy after his Qatar opening number – as a Cairoli-esque regularity, rather than utter dominance, underpinned his success. Gajser seemed to collect his bad luck once the season had finished (injury in practice for the Motocross of Nations counting him out of the Maggiora spectacle, further problems after two crashes at the SMX and illness prompting absence at HRC's star-studded and formal 'Thanks' day in Japan) and utterly understandable cracks due to pressure would show in Belgium and Assen (a mistake in the second moto leading to the only '0' of '16). Tim has a very close support circle in his family but there were also moments when the volatility of the working relationship with his father shifted from positive to negative and episodes around the Honda awning in Assen and Glen Helen showed what an unusual set-up surrounds HRC's new star.

What now for Gajser? Perhaps for the first time in his career he will have to deal with status as 'favourite' and with his moves and decisions even more keenly watched and observed. He cannot swoop in from the wings any more. Being World Champion may not radically change many people but some cannot cope with the weight; David Philippaerts and his struggles in 2009 come to mind. Gajser will have the presence of Jeffrey Herlings as a reminder of the fresh challenges he will face.







2

**ROMAIN FEBVRE****MONSTER ENERGY YAMAHA FACTORY RACING****CHAMPIONSHIP POSITION: 4TH, GRAND PRIX WINS (FROM 18): 3, GRAND PRIX PODIUMS: 9**

There were times when Romain Febvre cut a ragged figure in 2016. The Frenchman certainly lacked the efficiency with his starts that assisted his world championship tilt from the Grand Prix of Sweden onwards in 2015. Too often he was rallying hard from the depths of the top ten in the formative stages of motos and paid for it brutally with his head-plant in qualification at Matterley Basin for the British Grand Prix – two weeks after winning in France – just his third victory of the season and what seemed the beginning of a hard push against Tim Gajser. Matterley should have seen the spar between Febvre and Gajser narrow and become salivating; it was only round eleven of eighteen and just twenty-four points split the duo. They had also faced-off with a moto each in France and clashed after the chequered flag three rounds previously in a bout of mutual criticism over the other's tactics and conduct on track (a time when Jeremy Van Horebeek horribly misjudged his awkward relationship with Febvre and almost lost his Yamaha contract for 2017 with a frankly daft take-out of the champion).

Off the track Romain wore the slightly hardened exterior of a man in-demand and under pressure. On the dirt he often rode with an urgency and awareness of his 'target' status; there was more of an edge to his moves and aggression compared to the blossoming of 2015. But there was also brilliance. Febvre was progressing in 2016 and bringing that attacking dimension on a more regular basis. He misjudged occasionally and hit the ground but

also won in the gasping heat of Thailand and then the cold of Holland and missed the podium only three times in ten Grands Prix until the accident in the UK that sidelined him with a concussion for two fixtures and gave Gajser breathing room.

Still with Yamaha, still the top dog in a team where principal Michele Rinaldi insists he is one of the most focussed riders he's had in his twenty-five year tenure, Febvre should be starting to ripen in MXGP: 2017 will be just his third season on a 450.





## 3

## TONY CAIROLI

RED BULL KTM

CHAMPIONSHIP POSITION: 2ND, GRAND PRIX WINS (FROM 18): 3, GRAND PRIX PODIUMS: 8

A weird season for the most decorated rider in Grand Prix in the last ten years. The swap between works 350 and 450 machinery continued but more often than not Tony had to contend with the zest and verve of riders like Tim Gajser and Romain Febvre and didn't seem to have much in the way to combat rivals that are ten and six years his junior. Cairoli would say towards the end of 2016 that the season had been one of his worst in terms of performance but he still persevered to finish as runner-up and there were moments of vintage #222 in Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the Dutch sand of Assen.

For the roots of his discontent we have to backtrack a little. After five years of dominance in the premier class 2015 was authentically unsettling for Tony. First there was the Villopoto fuss (where the Sicilian took the unprecedented and rare step of avoiding most pre-Qatar interview requests), the first deliberation over 350/450 and a move away from the motorcycle that had previously delivered five titles and then the broken arm at Maggiora that represented his worse injury since wrecking a knee in the second half of the 2008 MX2 campaign.

Tony defied the pain in the summer of 2015 for as long as he could and then took his first substantial breather from MXGP to get the bone fixed. In theory his motivation was suitably refreshed for '16 and where he entered the championship without the gold number plate for the first time since 2009. Such a shame then that – like Clement Desalle – an injury in pre-season practice left his torso and neck with debilitating nerve damage and considerably slowed his attack on the initial phase of

the term. Cairoli pushed his patience to the limit and simply could not build the same momentum as his rivals. If the 450SX-F can finally be twisted to his liking and he arrives in Qatar in good shape then at 31 he will be poised to enact arguably the best chapter of his MXGP hegemony.





2016 MXGP TOP FIVE





## 4

## MAX NAGL

ROCKSTAR ENERGY ICEONE HUSQVARNA

CHAMPIONSHIP POSITION: 3RD, GRAND PRIX WINS (FROM 18): 1, GRAND PRIX PODIUMS: 7

Third place was Max Nagl's best championship classification since finishing as runner-up in 2009. Importantly the German showed he could make it through the longest Grand Prix schedule on record in good health and only missed the points once from a total of thirty-six motos. There were races when the 29 year old wasn't able to unleash arguably his strongest asset – those rapier starts – and where perhaps one of his noticeable weaknesses – hard and decisive overtaking – became more prominent. There was a purple patch in rounds three, four and five in Holland, Argentina and Mexico where three podiums hinted at a surge towards the top of the standings but then the rostrum form became intermittent until a breakthrough win at his favoured circuit of Loket; the same event where he was able to confirm renewal of a third season with Husqvarna when his position alongside the incoming Gautier Paulin had allegedly looked a little shaky. In comparison to his early season prominence of 2015 then this year felt a little underwhelming but the final classification showed that Max can play the long game and is a member of the MXGP pack that cannot be ignored.





2016 MXGP TOP FIVE









5

**GLENN COLDENHOFF****RED BULL KTM****CHAMPIONSHIP POSITION: 7TH, GRAND PRIX WINS [FROM 18]: 0, GRAND PRIX PODIUMS: 1**

There are several types of request you can make of a rider but the underlying hope for many is a demonstration of progress. Red Bull KTM had their big-hitter in Tony Cairoli but were still looking for promise in their number two after several seasons of ups-and-downs with the likes of Ken De Dycker and Tommy Searle. Glenn Coldenhoff started his second term in the premier class in typically slow and unspectacular fashion (2014 and his last in MX2 was the exception to the likeable Dutchman's norm with three podiums in the first four rounds) and Glenn only just stopped short of publicly admitting that the set-up of the works 450SX-F was still not refined to his smooth style. Coldenhoff, in the first of a two year deal with the Austrians, was not rattled and KTM's management were also keen to stress that the low-maintenance athlete was not under pressure to be at Cairoli's level.

As 2016 moved on Glenn was making in-roads on the podium group and was gaining confidence. He led motos (Holland the USA) and captured four top three results in five motos for what was an especially encouraging finale. A trophy at his home Grand Prix was utterly deserving and then he aptly backed-up the achievements of Jeffrey Herlings at the Motocross of Nations to help the Dutch to a memorable celebration. If 'The Hoff' can start 2017 where he left off in 2016 then he will be hitting form good enough to look at the top three in the championship. It was #259's heightened impression at the end of 2016 that drew the nod in his favour. Reasonably consistent seasons were unveiled by the likes of Jeremy Van Horebeek and Evgeny Bobryshev while Gautier Paulin also sprayed champagne on three occasions but perhaps was far below the level both followers, MXGP fans and ultimately HRC expected.

**OTHER MENTIONS...**

The motivation for his participation in the two season-closing MXGP events was a controversial subject for discussion, particularly when he ruled himself out of Nations consideration but Eli Tomac's Grand Prix career thus far reads four motos, four wins and an undisputed claim of superiority both at Charlotte and Glen Helen. Clement Desalle had the worse possible start to the season as new works rider and the hit to his confidence as well as crucial work in an important phase of the relationship with Kawasaki and the new KX450F-SR to-boot meant the Belgian took longer to get into contention for victories than expected. It was heart-warming to see #25 clinch his twentieth career success at Assen (the winningest rider in the premier class behind Cairoli since the start of the decade). Still staying with Kawasaki and Tommy Searle showed some of his best form in recent memory in what was always going to a year of recovery from two turgid seasons of fortune. Searle routinely lacked starting prowess until the final third of the campaign when some long overdue development on the stock KX showed that his speed was not far from the top five classifications he desired.



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# HAPPY DAYS...??

By Adam Wheeler

**MXGP** – like any sport – enjoys a bit of hype. Each season could be the ‘best’ or the ‘most competitive or open’ and for those writing about the sport (which sadly feels less and less from the circuits every year) we are often armed with some stats or information to loosely back up the estimation. Quite rightly the Cairoli-Villopoto duel – the two biggest names in global motocross at that time – had the 2015 pre-season talk revolving around words like ‘classic’ and ‘defining’. It was a 23 year old French rookie, that fell foul of the MX2 age limit by all of twenty-four hours that emerged from the depths of the radar and sideswiped everybody. Tim Gajser replicated the feat this year – even more emphatically – and deservedly headed our ‘Top 5’ listing in this very issue (although a summation article like that can never really do justice to the efforts and performances that a range of top flite athletes unveil across eighteen Grands Prix and thirty-six motos).

Is MXGP more open than ever? Can a greater number of riders vie for the championship? On paper is certainly looks that way: eighteen factory or semi-works racers, seventeen of which have Grand Prix winning experience representing six brands in total with official race teams. In the last two years there have been seven different victors of MXGP rounds, in 2014 there were six, 2013 just four. In 2016 nine different nationalities tasted MXGP podium champagne.

The FIM Motocross World Championship has an awkward way of working with a vast calendar, immense geographical spread but a largely Eurocentric base, and the eventual rider and team that emerges triumphant usually has to bank on a large slice of fortune as well as a remarkable physiology (one of the drawbacks of thirty-eight motos being the higher level of attrition due to the demands and Russian roulette nature of so many starts and potentially hazardous race situations).

Perhaps ‘success’ can also be about the memories that the sport and its participants leave the fans and observers. There were some tremendous pockets of action and drama throughout the relentless 2016 schedule. If I cast my thoughts back across the season then several scenes quickly come to mind...even after sixteen years without missing a Grand Prix (being absent from the round in Thailand last March was slightly disorientating but at least afforded an evaluation of how MXGP comes across with its live television coverage and the renovation of which I’ve covered a couple of times in Blogs this summer).

There was an aura of magnificence around Tim Gajser and Jeffrey Herlings and the match-up between these former MX2 rivals must be one of the big selling points for MXGP in 2017. As I wrote previously Herlings’ dash against Cooper Webb and Austin Forkner at the Monster Energy Grand Prix of Americas within the Charlotte Dirt Track was as inspiring as it was impressive. Watch here.





Romain Febvre's duel with Gajser at the Grand Prix of France that saw motos shared and the dispute went down to the final laps ramped up the tension between the champion and champion-elect and meant that the qualification crash by the former two weeks later at the British Grand Prix was one of the most deflating moments of 2016. Gajser's achievement of winning on his debut appearance in the MXGP class through the Qatar night sky was another standout but lasted only six months before Eli Tomac's supremacy blasted the record book entry to the margins.

2016 did also feel drawn-out, and there was a palm-thumping sense of frustration that Clement Desalle broke his arm two weeks before Qatar, that Gautier Paulin continued to be throttled in the harmful sense by his set-up at HRC, that Max Nagl could not be more consistent, that Tony Cairoli would feel moved to describe the term as his 'worst' in recent memory despite ending the campaign as runner-up. Gajser could have won MXGP with two rounds to go. Febvre did it at the penultimate fixture of 2015. The numbers always hint at an embarrassment of riches but – and maybe fantastically – sport is not always mathematical. A new season will come around and the standings will reset and the playing field and form table will level. Ready for some more?







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## GETTING A1 ON ANAHEIM...

By Steve Matthes

**W**e always say every year is 'wide open' in the Monster Energy AMA Supercross series, a FIM World Championship and although that wouldn't be exactly correct this year, I wouldn't say there's a favorite.

Red Bull KTM's Ryan Dungey and Honda's Ken Roczen have to be dead-on even money favorites to win the crown this year right? It just FEELS like Roczen's time but yet Dungey is the defending champion and is just so strong week-in and week-out. Right behind those two is Monster Kawasaki's Eli Tomac who seemed to figure out that new Kawasaki KX450F near the end of last supercross season. I don't think there's any doubt your 2017 champion is coming from this group but which one is way too close to call.

But Anaheim...yes, Anaheim 1 is a special race. It's full of hype and usually doesn't disappoint. It's also full of surprises and doesn't necessarily indicate who's going to do what for the season. Last year Rockstar Husqvarna's Jason Anderson took off for an impressive win. Yes, Anderson was very good through the rest of the campaign but he couldn't be consistent enough to make things happen to stay with the three headed monster.

Roczen came out of the gate on the new RCH Suzuki ride in 2015 and took off for the win and although he would've been there the whole year, just a few races later he went 2.5 on a triple, hurt his ankle and that was it for him.

A few years ago it was Trey Canard and Davi Millsaps who put on a hell of a race and although Millsaps was strong all season long, it was Ryan Villopoto and Dungey who ruled the rest of the races.

So, you see what I mean. Anaheim one is everything except it's not you know?

In order to think about what we're going to see in little under a month from now you have to look at the past as well as the future. The future, to me anyways, is Ken Roczen taking his place as the 450SX champion. The past is that we see a shock or two at the opener.

With that in mind I think Roczen comes out swinging at the opener and establishes his place as number one on the totem pole. He looked great at the Monster Energy Cup on the new Honda, the team and he will have figured out the bike even better by A1 and as I said, the torch has to pass at some point. Roczen's younger, he's got more raw speed and his confidence is sky high right now. He takes A1.

Remember the surprises part? Well, that's in regards to who takes runner-up at A1 and that's Roczen's teammate Cole Seely. Yup, you read it here first. Seely's good at Anaheim type of dirt, he's underrated as a supercross racer and he'll start all fiery to make Big Red very happy. Now, will he stay here the rest of the year? Well I think he'll win a race or two but Dungey and Tomac are, barring injury of course (keep in mind EVERYTHING is barring injury in this meat





grinder of a sport) better racers than Seely but I think Cole's time is coming. He'll be stoked on his second place at the opener.

Third place will be ol' reliable Ryan Dungey. He'll start about fifth or so and quietly use his endurance and speed to get the final spot on the box. And then for the next sixteen weeks, he'll be on the podium every single time or just about any-ways. This is what it's going to take for Roczen to beat the champ. And I think he does it.

\*\*\*

One interesting twist on things for 2017 is the addition of timed main events. The folks at Feld Motorsports, the promoters, made this change after seeing some tracks dip into the 45-second or below lap time mark. This makes the stars of the sport on the track for less than twenty minutes (heat and main) and that's not enough for the public that drops fifty dollars or more for a ticket. So heats and mains are timed for 2017 to give the stars more time on the track.

Will it provide better racing? No, I don't think so. Rarely do the races come down to the last lap but I suppose once in a while this new format will help. On average the racers will do about 3-4 laps more per main.

But this just in, SX is hard. There are plenty of riders from tenth on back that struggle to do 20 laps at a heart rate of 170 or more so I think back of the pack guys will suffer from this. There might be an increase in lappers for the

top riders so that's something to look for. And a guy like Eli Tomac who struggles with starts and/or opening laps will have that much more time to move up. Tomac's about the only guy I can see really enjoying this change!





# PRODUCTS







## ODFU

In the depths of The Bike Shed in Shoreditch, London the work of Kevin Wilson and ODFU fill a section of the shelves and alongside TBS' own apparel and that of brands like Roland Sands and Belstaff. That the t-shirts (posted with detailed packaging when ordered through the website) have a place in a cave of cool like the The Bike Shed club, exhibition space and in-demand restaurant (there is even a Barber shop inside, watch out for our feature in the first OTOR of 2017) says a lot about ODFU's appeal. As we've said before there is a special collaboration with On-Track Off-Road and there are still a few garments left from the second run that Kev had to order. Have a look on the ODFU Blog and website for more details:

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**WE ASKED ROLAND TO GATHER HIS THOUGHTS AFTER THE SPATE OF 2016 SHOWS AND EXHIBITIONS AND OUR RELIABLE TESTER WAS SLIGHTLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF ELECTRIC BIKES AND ALSO CURIOUS ABOUT THE RISE OF CHINA AS A FORCIBLE MOTORCYCLE MANUFACTURER. HERE'S RB'S LATEST BLOG AND RUMINATIONS ON RECESSES OF THE INDUSTRY...**

# **WHERE'S THE SPARK?**

Words & pics by  
Roland Brown/respective brands



**W**hat ever happened to the brave new world of electric motorcycles? Electric and hybrid cars are big news these days, from supercars like the LaFerrari and Porsche 918 to the increasingly popular Nissan Leaf and Toyota Prius. By contrast, battery-powered bikes were conspicuous by their absence at the recent shows in Cologne, Milan and Birmingham.

True, Californian firm Zero had some subtly revised roadsters, and Energica of Italy was in Milan with its sporty Ego and naked Eva models, which are now being produced in tiny numbers. Vespa displayed a striking battery-powered prototype scooter, the Elettrica, that might soon follow BMW's slow-selling C-Evolution into the showrooms.

But there was no sign of the Victory Empulse and prototype Harley-Davidson Livewire that seemed to be showing the way forward a few years ago. Or of electric motorbikes from other major manufacturers, like the racy RC-E prototype that Honda displayed in 2011. The motorcycle world just doesn't seem ready for battery power yet, essentially because current technology does not allow sufficient performance without too much cost and weight.

But that doesn't mean the bike firms aren't thinking about such things, as BMW's bike design chief Edgar Heinrich recently showed in Los Angeles when he unveiled a self-balancing concept bike, the Vision Next 100. The 100 in its name refers to years rather than weeks, so don't hold your breath waiting for this futuristic machine with its "emissionless" engine (no further details given) that resembles an traditional boxer unit, and expands sideways at speed to provide wind protection.





The bike's "assistance systems" mean it can't fall over, so you don't need a helmet or leathers, just "data glasses" and air-conditioned textiles. Heinrich said he was looking more than a decade into the future, when "most vehicles will be driving around autonomously". Who knows how motorcycles will fit into that slightly worrying scenario.

Better news is that mighty Apple, known to be developing autonomous vehicles (under the code-name Project Titan), is considering getting into motorbikes too. Reports in publications including the New York Times and Financial Times have claimed that Apple, generally rated the world's most valuable company, is considering buying not just famed F1 and supercar firm McLaren, but also Lit Motors. This much less well-known Californian firm has been developing a radical battery-powered motorcycle, the C-1, for more than a decade.

The stories ring true partly because Lit is a high-tech start-up based close to Apple's headquarters. And because not only is the C-1 an electric bike that looks like an even more fully-enclosed version of BMW's short-lived, turn-of-the-Millennium scooter of the same name (from the side it resembles half a hatchback car), it also incorporates computer-controlled gyroscopes that allow it to balance when stationary.

Lit's website ([www.litmotors.com](http://www.litmotors.com)) features a video showing a car running into the side of the C-1, which is shunted sideways but remains upright, seemingly without damage. No wonder Apple is interested. In a future world of self-driving vehicles, the C-1's stability and strength could give it huge potential as a compact, one- or two-person vehicle.

## ELECTRICAL & CHINESE







Back in the present day, one area that is generating plenty of new metal is China. And not before time. At the Intermot show back in 2002, Chinese firm Zongshen, who had just won the World Endurance championship with a Suzuki GSX-R1000, held a press conference to announce that they would be producing a large-capacity bike within a few years.

The Chinese motorbike revolution was under way, it seemed; but even now there is no sign of the production superbike that seemed imminent 14 years ago. Instead of attacking the top end of the market, the Chinese brands have become more successful by improving the quality of their small bikes – just as the Japanese firms did in the early Sixties, before Honda's CB750 arrived in 1969 to launch the superbike era.

The Chinese bikes that began appearing in Western markets more than a decade ago were small and cheap, and in many cases not very well-made. Their reliability was not helped by the fact that many riders attracted only by price didn't look after them properly. This has gradually changed, as quality has improved and importers have addressed failings by upgrading suspension, brakes and tyres.

Recent years have seen some imaginative and entertaining Chinese-based bikes. French firm Mash has builds retro-styled roadsters, and recently launched a stylish café racer, the TT40, powered by a Chinese-built, 400cc version of Honda's XBR500 engine. Birmingham based Mutt's cool singles include the Desert Racer 125, which resembles a miniature Triumph Bonneville. Black Douglas of Italy goes further: its Sterling, built in Milan around a 230cc Zongshen engine, resembles a vintage bike. The hand-built Sterling is expensive but many of the new wave of Chinese-based bikes are cheap and cheerful, in a good way.

Meanwhile firms including CF Moto and WK have been producing increasingly capable 650cc twins, typically based on Kawasaki's ER-6 family, and even competing in the Isle of Man. And the latest news is that Qianjiang, Benelli's parent company, is nearing production with China's biggest bike yet: a shaft-drive tourer based on a revised version of Benelli's 1130cc triple engine. Like electric bikes, the Chinese are coming. It's just taking a bit longer than expected.













## INDIAN

We spent an illuminating hour at Fuelled Apparel in London last week speaking with Ian O'Reilly about the company's work in production of the riding and leisurewear apparel for the iconic Indian brand. There are some seriously cool articles in the 2017 brochure and the quality is outstanding. Flagging the Logo Knit Zip Thru here that is made from merino wool and the styling takes inspiration from the Indian motorcycle racers of the past. Another option for the winter is the Plaid Gray shirt. It might not be too easy to find an Indian dealer this side of the Atlantic but full details on the clothes and some incredibly cool t-shirts and other gear can be found on the website:

[www.indianmotorcycle.media/product-category/apparel/](http://www.indianmotorcycle.media/product-category/apparel/)







## BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls  
By Monster Energy









# ON TRACK OFF ROAD

SEE YOU IN 2017...



**'On-track Off-road'** is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP.

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**Cover shot:** Selection of 2016 World & AMA Champions

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